

Erin Leigh George National Campaigns Manager Clean Slate Initiative | cleanslateinitiative.org

RE: Testimony In support of Senate Bill No. 1019

March 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom; Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein; and esteemed Members of the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee:

My name is Erin George, and I am the National Campaigns Manager for the Clean Slate Initiative, a national bipartisan coalition advancing policies to automatically clear all eligible criminal records across the country. We believe that people who have been arrested or who have been convicted and served their time earn the chance for a better future. To promote justice, as well as racial and economic equity, the Clean Slate Initiative aims to transform the system by expanding expungement opportunities and lifting unnecessary barriers to employment, education, and housing. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 1019, an act that would put into place a system for automatic erasure of qualifying criminal records for people who remain crime-free for a set period. S.B. 1019 will help people capture the second chance they've earned by streamlining petition-based record-clearing—a costly and time-intensive process that prevents the vast majority of eligible people from ever obtaining needed relief.

In Connecticut, approximately 450,000 people experience the far-reaching ramifications of a criminal record. Sadly, the vast majority cannot obtain relief due to lengthy waiting periods and a complex and limited record-clearing process. When it comes to securing employment, people with criminal records are half as likely as other job seekers to get a callback from an employer. The challenges associated with "employability" trickle to every part of a person's life, and specifically can impact and place strain on families. In fact, nearly half of all U.S. children now have at least one parent with a criminal record. The barriers associated with parents' records have negative consequences for children's cognitive development, school performance, and employment outcomes in adulthood.

Connecticut's record clearance law, as currently codified, not only negatively impacts individuals with a criminal record who are facing lifelong collateral punishments but also runs afoul of current research. Specifically, people with criminal records who have remained crime-

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  A project of Santa Clara University, *Paper Prisons*, "The Connecticut Second Chance Expungement Gap," https://paperprisons.org/states/CT.html

free for four to seven years are no more likely than the general population to commit a new crime.<sup>2</sup> Senate Bill 1019 proposes more reasonable waiting periods that will immediately help affected individuals and will not diminish public safety.

As Connecticut enters a phase of post-pandemic planning, the need for expedited economic recovery is paramount. Legislation, like Senate Bill 1019, can support justice-involved individuals, local businesses, and the economy. Studies have shown that the presence of a criminal record reduces job opportunities. For instance, an individual is 63 percent more likely to receive a job interview if they have a clean record. People who have had a criminal record cleared are 11 percent more likely to secure employment and 22 percent more likely to see an increase in income than those who have not.

Finally, under Connecticut's existing law, research shows that less than 4 percent of eligible people successfully clear their conviction records. By passing Senate Bill 1019 to automate and expand record clearing provisions, tens of thousands of Connecticut residents can begin to experience the second chance they have earned by moving through life with a clean record.

In June 2018, Pennsylvania became the first state in the nation to enact Clean Slate legislation. Since then, Clean Slate legislation has passed in both Utah and Michigan and campaigns to advance Clean Slate policies are active in states across the country, including New York, Delaware, North Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, and Oregon. Connecticut has the opportunity to play a leading role in the national movement to create equity and meaningful second chances by passing SB 1019. The Clean Slate Initiative strongly encourages all members of the Judiciary Committee, on both sides of the aisle, to support this important measure.

Thank you for your consideration,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Alfred Blumstein and Kiminori Nakamura, "Extension of Current Estimates of Redemption Times: Robustness Testing, Out-of-State Arrests, and Racial Differences," November 2012. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/240100.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Amanda Agan and Sonja Starr. "Ban the Box, Criminal Records, and Racial Discrimination: A Field Experiment." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 133, Issue 1, February 2018, Pages 191–235, https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjx028

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Collateral Consequences Resource Center. "Michigan set-asides found to increase wages and reduce recidivism." February 27, 2018. https://ccresourcecenter.org/2018/02/27/michigan-set-asides-found-to-increase-wages-and-reduce-recidivism/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Footnote 1.